



Open Statement on the Escalating Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza

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Today marks the 23-year anniversary of the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), which recognises the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls and affirms the importance of women's participation in conflict prevention, resolution and peace building.

We the undersigned women leaders and peace activists use this anniversary to express our deep concern over the [backsliding](#) of the WPS agenda globally, as the number of women and girls living in conflict affected areas [continues to rise](#) and women remain excluded from formal peace building processes. We are alarmed by the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza, which has resulted in 1.4 million people displaced and deprivation of food, water and shelter. We condemn all attacks on civilian life, which have resulted in the killing of over 8000 Palestinians and 1500 Israelis. Women and children are the majority of those who have been killed. This violence serves as a devastating example of this global failing to protect the most vulnerable.

We affirm the call made by the United Nations Secretary General António Guterres that "We need to implement the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in full, now".

We amplify the voices of Palestinian and Israeli peace activists calling for an urgent de-escalation of the conflict between Hamas and Israel and the protection of civilians.

"Peace right now for women in Gaza means stop fire, stop killing our children, stop bombarding our houses, stop bombarding our churches, our mosques, our hospitals," demands Soraida Hussein-Sabbah, a gender and advocacy specialist with ActionAid in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

"It is absolutely necessary that we resume negotiations, that we think again about a solution for the Israelis and Palestinians," urges Pascale Chen, an Israeli feminist who is part of Women Wage Peace.

Signatories to this statement join this urgent plea for an immediate ceasefire, the protection of civilians and respect for human rights and international law.

We remind all UN Member States of their commitments to the UNSCR 1325 on WPS and their obligation to uphold International Humanitarian Law, which requires the protection of civilians, their direct property and environment and right to receive necessary assistance, such as food, shelter, water, healthcare etc.^[1] The Australian

Government, and its ministers, must reinforce these obligations as part of the rules based global order and as a State party to the Geneva Conventions and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

We express our concern over the disproportionate impact of this conflict on civilians, especially women and children. Women and children make up the majority of the 1.4 million people that have been displaced and of the 8,005 deaths in Gaza, 3324 are estimated to be children. There are currently [50,000 pregnant women](#) in Gaza with 5,522 expected to give birth in the coming two months. The World Health Organisation has reported more than [136 attacks](#) on health care services in the occupied Palestinian Territories since the beginning of hostilities on 7 October. This includes 59 attacks on the Gaza Strip and an attack on [Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City which killed more than 470 civilians](#). We note that it is illegal for any conflict party to target healthcare facilities, regardless of any advance warning and this must stop. The Israeli government's siege of Gaza has cut off food, water, medical supplies, electricity, fuel and telecommunications to the entire civilian population.

We note that [Australia has a longstanding defence relationship with Israel](#) and is also a State party to the Arms Trade Treaty, which prohibits the transfer of conventional arms to countries who have breached international humanitarian law or parties responsible for the perpetration of gender-based violence.^[2] We call on the Australian government to halt sending any weapons or troops to participate in the current conflict between Israel and Hamas and for the Department of Defence to refuse the sale or transfer of weapons by Australian businesses.

As we mark the 23rd anniversary of UNSCR 1325, women leaders and peace activists around the country call on the Australian Government to demonstrate leadership in advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda, by playing an active role as a peacebuilder in de-escalating this conflict and promoting a human rights-based approach to international peace and security that :

- Ensures all parties abide by their obligations under international law and makes all necessary efforts to protect civilian populations in the Occupied Palestinian territories and Israel
- Calls for an immediate ceasefire, the release of hostages, and an end to the use of explosive weapons by all parties in all populated areas
- Demands that Israel lift the siege on Gaza and ensures access to food, water, medical supplies and energy needs that are essential to the survival of people in the enclave
- Increases humanitarian assistance to meet the immediate and long-term recovery needs of the people of Gaza; including gender responsive assistance that addresses the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls, survivors of sexual and gender based violence, and psychosocial and trauma needs
- Ensures no Australian troops or weapons are deployed in response to the conflict
- Supports a UN-brokered peace process that includes women's participation in conflict resolution and peace building and works towards a just peace and an end to Israel's occupation of Palestine
- Initiates a dialogue in Australia on peaceful coexistence of Palestinians and Israelis.

About us:

The Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security ('the Coalition') is a non-partisan and independent coalition of civil society organisations, networks and individuals working to advance the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Australia, Asia and the Pacific region and globally. The Coalition brings together activists, feminists, practitioners, humanitarian actors and those with first-hand experience working on gender, peace and security. Coalition members have wide-ranging expertise in gender and peace.

Signatures:

1. Michelle Higelin, Executive Director, ActionAid Australia, Co-Chair, Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security
2. Dr. Ludmilla Kwitko, Co-Chair, Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
3. James Cox, Executive Director, Peacific
4. Susan Hutchinson, PhD Candidate, Australian National University, Individual
5. Linh Dieu Nong, Program Manager, International Women's Development Agency (IWDA)
6. Dr. Jacqui True, Professor, Monash University, Individual
7. Susanne Legena, CEO, Plan International Australia
8. Leanne Smith, Chief Executive, Australian Human Rights Commission
9. M. Anne Brown, Director; Peace and Conflict Studies Institute Australia (PaCSIA) Individual
10. Serge Loode, Director, Peace and Conflict Studies Institute Australia (PaCSIA)
11. Leonie M Ebert, Founder, The Graham F Smith Peace Foundation
12. Dr Tania Miletic, Ass. Director Initiative for Peacebuilding, University of Melbourne
13. Laura J. Shepherd, Professor of International Relations, University of Sydney
14. Federica Caso, Lecturer, La Trobe University, Individual
15. Fiona Jenkins, Professor of Philosophy, Australian National University, Individual
16. Patricia Garcia
17. Lauren Lowe, PhD Student and Research Assistant
18. Priya Dhanani, PhD Student, Monash University, Individual
19. Susanne Newton, Deputy Mayor of Darebin and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Member
20. Margaret Reynolds, National President, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
21. Janette McLeod, Board Member, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Australia

22. Susan Herbert, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Individual
23. Patricia Dwyer, Member, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Australia
24. Dr Deborah Jordan, Member, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Individual
25. Zohl de Ishtar, Member, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Individual
26. Claire Moore, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Individual
27. Emma Farrant, Member, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Individual
28. Stella Boyages, Member, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
29. Margid Bryn-Burns, Member, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Queensland Australia
30. Wendy Flannery, Vice-President, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Australia & UNAA Queensland
31. Norma Forrest, Member, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
32. Christine Henderson, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Australia
33. Joy Hinckley, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
34. Bharti Desai, COO, Individual, ActionAid Australia
35. Sally Henderson, Head of Programs, ActionAid Australia, Individual
36. Eunice Leons, Institutional Partnerships Coordinator, ActionAid Australia
37. Stephanie Ellen, Analyst, ActionAid
38. Alice Ridge, Senior Research, Policy and Advocacy Advisor, International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), Individual
39. Cynthia Paton, Program Manager, International Women's Development Agency (IWDA)
40. Briana Jones, Program Coordinator, International Women's Development Agency, (IWDA), Individual
41. Nuria Morato, International Women's Development Agency, (IWDA), Individual
42. Liz Comrie-Thomson, International Women's Development Agency (IWDA)
43. Annie Butler, Federal Secretary, Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation
44. Daniela Philipson Garcia, PhD Candidate, Monash University / CEVAW, Individual
45. Jo Schofield, National President, United Workers Union
46. Wil Stracke, Assistant Secretary, Victorian Trades Hall Council
47. Virginia Haussegger AM, Journalist
48. Barbara O'Dwyer, Member, Australian Coalition on Women, Peace and Security

49. Mimi Marcus, Principal, Marcus Lane Group
50. Boni Maywald, retired Aid worker and Civilian Peace Monitor
51. Carolyn Brennan, Retired teacher
52. Zahra Karimi, Writer, Researcher & Women's rights activist from Afghanistan
53. Lynn Chaitman, Mental Health Specialist
54. Louise Olliff, Consultant, Refugee Policy, Research and Community Engagement
55. Elisabeth Porter
56. Tevvi Bullock
57. Yolanda Riveros-Morales
58. Lynette Lane
59. Natasha Singh Raghuvanshi
60. Victoria Illingworth
61. Celia Karpfen
62. Elenore Karpfen
63. Janette Porteous
64. Ellen Bennett
65. Susan Brennan QC
66. Audrey Statham
67. Catherine Heggen
68. Andrew McNee
69. Heather Fitt
70. Angela Clare
71. Denise Cauchi
72. Tracey Newbury
73. Susan Rudland
74. Ruth Pearce
75. Isadora Vadasz
76. Victoria Scheyer
77. Julie Marlow

[1] The Palestinian Authority has ratified the Four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and the two Protocols additional thereto. Israel has ratified the Four Geneva Conventions but has failed to ratify the additional protocols which cover colonial occupations and situations where people are unable to exercise their right to self-determination, as well as situations of non-international armed conflict.

[2] No items have been included in Australia's Arms Trade Treaty reports for the past three years as being transferred to Israel.